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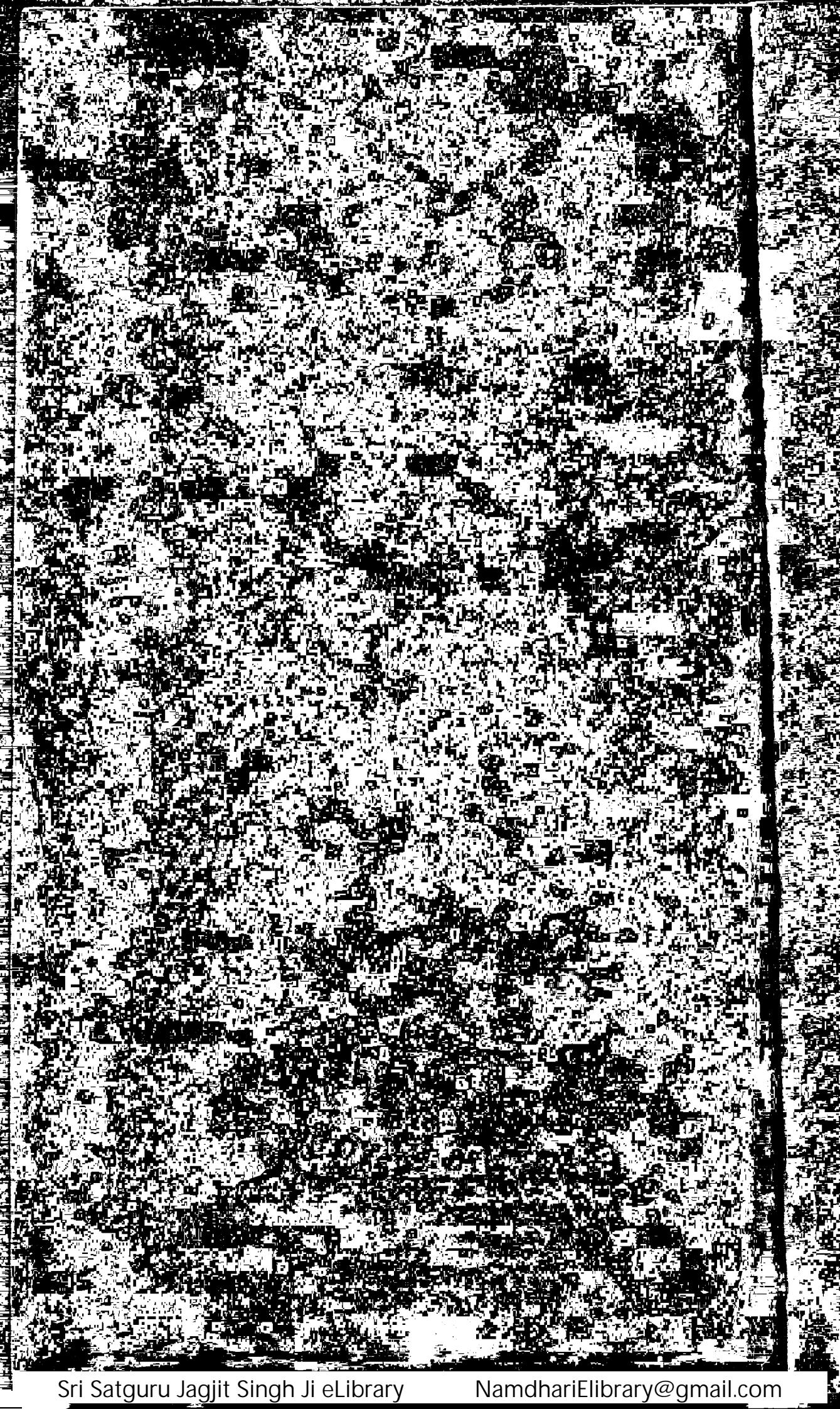
BHAKTI AND SHAKTI

(A Basic Sikh Concept)

by
SURJEET SINGH
P.E.S. (I) (Retd)



SIKH BOOK CENTRE
GURU GOBIND SINGH STUDY CIRCLE
Gurdwara Shaheedan,
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LUDHIANA—141002



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and
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Foreword

When I received the article "Bhakti and Shakti" by Principal Surjeet Singh Bhatia, I thought that it would take me at least two three sittings to go through this rather lengthy article. But the style of the writer is so easy and the subject matter so interesting that I read it thoroughly in one sitting and relished it. Inspite of some repetition here and there the interest of the reader does not flag anywhere. The teacher in him (the writer) does not leave anything to the imagination of the reader, but makes his point go home through copious quotations and invincible arguments.

Mr. Bhatia has not only dwelt on the nature of Bhakti and Shakti and its relevance in life, but has traced the evolution of a devotee from a Sikh to the Khalsa as a natural culmination from the teachings of the First Guru to the life and teachings of the Tenth Guru. This convincingly refutes the impression that the teachings of the Tenth Guru are a deviation from the teachings of the First Guru, far from it.

The Tenth Guru—a man par excellence (ਮਾਤਰ ਅਗੰਧਾ), a true Karmyogi, Love and Sacrifice incarnate, brave and humble, is the finest example of a free man—a perfect man—the last and only goal of every conceivable religion and philosophy.

Guru Gobind Singh, though a staunch believer in Nirakar did not hate or contradict the devotees of Sakar. He was a true cosmopolitan, as big as cosmos, embracing all faiths except the wickedness, evil minds and the criminal type.

The writer has in this article, given his own meanings to a few words such as Kirpan, Hanuman, Ram and Ravan etc. but it does not injure the spirit of the traditional meanings. Rather it makes his point clear.

I am sure that this article will go a long way to dispel the darkness which is engulfing us these days. Amen !

1504/2, Sector 43

Chandigarh

9.7.88

Dr. Prem Sagar

P.E.S. (I) (Rtd.)

Ex-Vice Chairman,
Punjab School Education Board.

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BHAKTI AND SHAKTI

Combining Bhakti (saintliness) with Shakti (power) was given a living and practical shape in the creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh. Sikhs consider this combination of Bhakti with Shakti, the concept of saint-soldiers, a peak of perfection of their religion. It is the culmination of the thought, ideology and programme of religio-social reconstruction put forward and initiated by Guru Nanak Dev. They profess Khalsa-characterized by saint-soldiers to be the practical manifestation of Guru Nanak's ideology.

Unfortunately many people have been calling this combination of Bhakti with Shakti a wide deviation from and antithesis to Guru Nanak's message of love and amity, peace and tranquility, universal brotherhood and equality of man. Wrongly interpreting Kirpan, an integral part of the Khalsa format, as Sikh symbol of shakti or a symbol of violence, they consider it completely out of place in the discipline of Bhakti. Religion, they argue is the love of God and devotional pursuit for the attainment of unison and ultimate merger with God, manifest in ultimate goodness. This, according to Saint Augustine is the ultimate aim of all human beings. This unison and merger with God is to be attained through devotional concentration upon and acquition of the qualities of God i.e. to be in tune with the ultimate goodness. This is what is meant by love of God and it is called saintliness. Saintliness or love of God is reflected in the love for the entire creation, particularly the entire mankind, considering it as fraternity of

equals, as God, the All-pervading, resides in all. Love of the entire mankind implies animosity towards none. So it becomes a purely peaceful pursuit, which leaves no scope for the use of force—the Shakti.

Sikhs do not consider Shakti and Bhakti diametrically apposed to each other nor detached from each other. They consider them necessary complements of each other. Shakti without Bhakti would generate cruelty and would create a Harnaksha, Ravana, Kans, Temur, Halaku or Hitler type of tyrant in man. But Bhakti without Shakti would make him incapable of defence against any tyrannical onslaught.

(2)

All religions recognise the dichotomy of good and evil. Acquisition of goodness and coming in complete attunement and consonance with goodness has the necessary pre-requisite of elimination of evil. A saint eliminates the evil in his own person by controlling his passions and lust, avarice and anger, pride and prejudices and fear and animosity. Though of course an extremely difficult task, he strives for this through a consistent and concerted effort of self restrain and sticking to certain ethical values and morality, which to sum up may be called the conquest of the self. Of course all this effort is to be crowned by the Grace of God, without which it may prove to be an exercise in futility. But how are you going to tackle the external evil ? What are you going to do with a merciless, stubborn, immoral and ruthless oppressor who is out to over-awe and demoralise you, and kill your conscience by spilling blood through massacre of your near and dear ones, by hurling indignations upon you through rape and abduction, by bringing poverty and destitution through arson, loot and plunder and imposition of heavy fines and taxes and to crown all by shaking your faith through destruction and humiliation of all that you cherish and look to in the hour of adversity. He goes to the extent of destroying your very culture and cultural

heritage by the destruction of your religio-social institutions and libraries and scuttling the growth of intelligentsia on the one hand and economy on the other. Is not your love for God, manifest in the love of humanity aroused to defend the innocent under such oppression ? Is it not belied, if not shattered, if all this oppression and cruelty is perpetrated upon the people around you under your very nose ? How are you going to tackle this menace when the unscrupulous oppressor does not listen to any reason and pleadings ? When your patience and toleration, logic and reason, perseverance and pleadings are misconstrued as your weakness and cowardice, the unscrupulous oppressor feels encouraged to perpetrate still more cruelty and he does not understand any language other than that of force, has he not to be talked to in the same language which alone he understands. Does a bhakta or saint have no responsibility towards his people, towards his country and towards the oppressed humanity ?

(3)

In order to find an answer to this question let us probe into the history of our tradition on the one hand and religious literature on the other, before we study what Guru Nanak and other Gurus have said and done in this connection.

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the great Indian Epics, which constitute the basis of our religio-social tradition forcefully recommend the use of force for curbing and eliminating evil to uphold the tenets of Dharam--Truth and Justice.

Rama, who as an incarnation of God, is considered the ideal human character. He is popularly known as Marayada Purshotam Rama. He had to use force for the emancipation and liberation of Sita—a symbol of goodness and devotion, basic traits of saintliness—from the clutches of Ravana—an embodiment of evil, when all pleadings, appeals and arguments failed. Ravana, it must be remembered, literally means the one who is engrossed in worldly pleasures and passions, lust

and avarice, and anger and pride. A very important character in Ramayana is Hanuman. The word Hanuman literally means the one who has subdued or killed the 'self' in him and is fully devoted and dedicated to his master, Rama, literally meaning 'The All Pervading'. Because of this devotion and dedication based upon self abdication and surrender to the will of the All Pervading Master, Rama, Hanuman acquired invincible moral strength and became the symbol of force. We can say he was Bhakti and Shakti combined together. Hanuman's character reveals the true character of a saint, who by the acquisition of invincible moral—power through faith, rose to the occasion to curb the evil in Ravana.

This story of the conquest of goodness over evil and the story of the responsibilities of a saint in Hanuman is displayed and celebrated every year, all over India, to remind the people about the necessity of deployment of force in not only curbing and subduing evil but also in liquidating and eliminating evil, when all other methods and means to contain it fail.

Sri Krishna, who is also revered and adorned as an incarnation of God, in his early youth, kills Kans, an embodiment of oppression and evil, who is out to torture and kill the innocent. In his later years he not only rescues Daropadi from the evil designs of Daryodhna, but also urges the Pandovas to fight out the evil in the Kurus, to the latter's elimination, when they refused to give justice to the Pandovas. He admonishes Arjuna when he shirks fighting the Kurus—his own kith and kin, for getting justice. His advice to Arjuna is "Remember Me and fight",

"મા અનુસ્મર યુધિજ 'ચ"

(Me, here represents God, as Sri Krishna is an incarnation of God).

Then in the Geeta Sri Krishna says, "Whenever Dharam (goodness) vanishes and evil prevails, I appear on the earth, rescue holy men, eliminate evil-doers and re-establish righteousness and Dharam. I have been doing this age after age,

again and again."

“ਯਦਾ ਗਦਾ ਹੀ ਧਰਮਾਸ਼ ਗਿਲਾਨਿਰ ਭਵਤੀ ਭਾਰਤ ।
ਅਭਯੁਥਾਨਮ ਅਧਰਮ ਅਸ਼ ਤਦਾਤਮਾਨਮ ਸਿਰਜਾਮਜਹਮ ।
ਪਰੀਤਾਰਣਾਯ ਸਾਧੂ ਨਾਮ ਵਿਨਾਸ਼ਾਯ ਦਸ਼ਕ੍ਰਿਤਾਮ ।
ਧਰਮ ਸੰਸਥਾਪਨਾਰਥਾਯ ਸੰਭਵਾਮੀ ਯੁਗੇ ਯੁਗੇ ।

Coming to the Indian mythological stories, we find God Himself coming down on the earth, in the form of Narsingha to save Bhakta Prehlad from the persistent oppression by his father Harnaksha—again an embodiment of evil. Harnaksha was killed by Narsingha Avtar by tearing his intestines out of his body. Thus the evil in Harnaksha was eliminated by force.

Another celebrated mythical story available in Markande Purana is that of the conquest of Durga over the demons. Demons representing evil, under the command of Mehkhasar created a hell of life for gods, representing goodness. Indra, the king of gods prayed to Durga to come to their rescue. The latter then in the form of Chandi (Bhagauti, Bhavani etc.) came down heavily upon the demons, with all her weapons, engaged them in a fierce blood spilling battle and killed each of the demons. Gods were thus rescued and emancipated and Dharam re-established through the elimination of evil by the use of force.

Coming to the historical times we find Bhakta Kabir declaring emphatically that it is his personal responsibility like that of a Kotwal to protect the honour and respect of saintly persons and punish the evil doers :

ਸੰਤਾ ਮਾਨਉ ਦੂਤਾ ਡਾਨਉ ਇਹ ਕੁਟਵਾਰੀ ਮੇਰੀ ।

(Ramkali—A. G. page 969).

This implies that God Himself is a big force but this force is to be invoked. A bhakta through devotion and dedication invokes this force, which residing in his own conscience makes the bhakta sufficiently bold and morally strong to shoulder the responsibility of upholding the prestige and honour of the saintly persons and if need be he would not hesitate to punish the evil doers like a kotwal, who is the

symbol of police force. Of course through this statement Bhakta Kabir reminds the saintly persons of their responsibility and obligation towards society and towards humanity.

(4)

For legitimizing the elimination of evil and re-establishing and propagating dharam, we have to draw a clear cut line between the two. Since man is the measure of relevance, this line is to be drawn on the basis of human values as both dharam and evil are to be measured in terms of humanity—man in general.

Guru Nanak Dev in Japuji defines dharam as the son of mercy. It is maintained, and kept in proper form and direction by patience and perseverance. Dharam thus defined forms the support on which rests the earth.

ਪੈਲੁ ਪਰਮੁ ਦਇਆ ਕਾ ਪੂਤੁ ॥

ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਬਾਪਿ ਰਖਿਆ ਜਿਨਿ ਸੂਤੁ ॥

Bhai Gurdas, a great exponent of the Sikh scriptures explains (Var I, pauri 46) that as mercy vanishes, the strength of dharam—the support on which the earth rests, becomes too weak to hold the earth in balance. Overgrowth of the feeling of the self, becomes ego which generates pride, which in its turn scuttles mercy, leading to its obliteration. This overgrowth of the self into pride is the root cause of evil. As it gains strength, and spreads rapidly, mercy vanishes, the earth is burdened too heavily for its support with the spread of evil. There arises thus the danger of the earth sinking into an abyssal deep—a sort of doom for the entire humanity.

It could be saved only by a saint—such a saint who is himself imbued with the spirit of mercy so that he can cultivate and spread mercy and at the same time is bold enough to take up cudgels against pride, the mother of evil. For the elimination of evil, pride has to be brought down.

Bhai Gurdas says that such a saint who could meet this

dual challenge of cultivating mercy and eliminating evil was nowhere to be found. There were many scholars, pandits and philosophers, but they lacked the spirit of devotional love, love for humanity or human touch. He says :—

ਭਾਉ ਨ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੈ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਚਾਰਿ ਬੋਦਿ ਸਿਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਪੜਿ ਪੇਖੇ ॥

(Var I, Pauri 25)

We must remember that knowledge and philosophical thinking without the human touch always generate pride.

Then Bh. Gurdas further says that no doubt there were many Sidh Jogis, Peers, Ghaus and Aulias, but they were all ascetics, incapable of meeting this challenge. An ascetic who has forsaken the world and has confined himself to a remote and solitary corner, for observing penances and continuing unperturbed and undistrubed with meditation and concentration upon the name of God or devotion to his deity, could not be the person to deal with the dreadful evil, as he could not understand and appreciate the sufferings of humanity groaning under oppression. How could a person, who has run away from the problems of family life and is dependent upon others even for keeping his body and soul together, come to the rescue of others. Guru Nanak admonishes the ascetics— Sidh Jogis (the so called bhaktas) for their apathy and lack of concern for their people when their country was in peril— i.e. either subjected to loot, oppression and heavy taxation by the unscrupulous rulers, who were self indulgent, cruel, corrupt and utterly irresponsible towards their duties for their subjects or it was suffering under the invasion of the cruel hordes of Babur perpetrating tyranny upon the innocent and weak people, subjecting them to loot, arson, massacre and humiliating women by rape, abduction and being dragged naked in bazars and streets. What could the so called saintliness mean to these--ascetics, if they left their kith and kin, their own people, their own country to such a misery. Guru Nanak asks them if they were doing justice to the grain they ate when their feelings were not aroused under so much of humiliation.

Guru Nanak therefore rose to the occasion to meet the challenge of cultivating dharam amongst the people on the one hand and arousing in them a spirit of being fearless enough to curb the evil.

ਚੜਿਆ ਸੋਧਣਿ ਧਰਤਿ ਲੋਕਾਈ —Bhai Gurdas

(5)

The seeds of this two pronged programme of cultivating dharam and eliminating evil are contained in the Mool Mantra the preamble of Sikh religion, annunciated by Guru Nanak. No doubt the Mool Mantra defines the qualitative personality of God. Being the ideal of Sikhism, every Sikh is required to contemplate and concentrate upon these qualities in order to imbibe and emulate them in his daily life, so that he is in consonance and unison with Him and ultimately merges with Him. This would make him a saint in accordance with Guru Nanak's concept of a saint—a Gurmukh. Nirabhau and Nirvair i.e. fearless and animosity towards non are two such qualities which if acquired would meet the above said challenge of propagating dharam and eliminating evil.

The quality of Nirvair i. e. animosity towards none is the basis of universal love, peace, amity, brotherhood and fraternity. This quality generates mercy and becomes the foundation of dharam in terms of human relations. It is this quality which is universally accepted as the characteristic of a saint.

Then in the Mool Mantra the word Nirvair is preceded by the word Nirbhau i. e. being fearless, which implies that to be Nirvair not only requires one to be Nirbhau (fearless) but it is rather a pre-requisite for being Nirvair. It must be remembered that fear always generates animosity. How can you be without any animosity, when you are under fear and threat of somebody. Animosity and fear go hand in hand and both are children and manifestation of pride and therefore evil. The pursuit for God, which is the saintly pursuit, therefore, presupposes the elimination of evil—the mother of fear and

animosity.

Then there is another very pertinent question. How can you remain in unperturbed devotion to God when your mind is constantly gripped with fear and threat which is raging around you with rampageous ferocity and casting its shadow over your mind. Saintliness requires a free mind. A mind pre-occupied with fear and threat cannot become the abode of God.

Again, in order to be in tune with and in unison with the fearless you are required to be fearless. It is this quality which emboldens you to cast off any shadow of fear and eliminate the cause of fear.

It should be noted that while trying to be fearless, a necessary precaution is to be without any animosity towards any one.

(6)

We can find a number of hints and get a number of clues from Guru Nanak's verses popularly known as Babur Vani, towards the use of force for fighting the evil, particularly that of aggression and oppression. He says that when people learnt about the march of Babur upon India, many pirs and saints were besought and prayers made, but none of them could either blind the Moghals or dissuade them from aggression. In the battle Babur used cannons against the deployment of intoxicated elephants by the Indian army. Had the Indian rulers taken proper care in time they would not have been punished (A.G. p. 417). This clearly indicates that Babur won because of his superiority of arms, against all types of either prayers or inapt preparation to check the onslaught of evil in the form of invasion.

But his major contribution towards the elimination of evil was to create an awareness about the ill effects of evil (prepetrated through tyranny and oppression) upon human life-individual, moral, social, cultural as well as religious. He

explains how the Kshatryas were forced to turn their back upon their traditional duty and responsibility of defending their land and people, how people were obliged to forsake their mother tongue in favour of a foreign language, they had begun to wear blue dress to please the tyrant rulers, they had begun to accept the humiliation of the demolition of their religious places, and taxation of their deities, even their religious and domestic rites had to suffer the inroads and impositions of the religious rites of the foreign rulers (Rag Basant page 1191). He warns people against the hypocrisy of double standards of inwardly worshipping their gods and outwardly wearing the Islamic outlook and reading the Islamic scriptures. As all this servility, humiliation, hypocrisy and social and moral degradation of the people was due to the tyranny and oppression, he advises people time and again to make bold to free their conscience from subjugation as well as discrimination resulting from caste system.

In order to cultivate an independent conscience, he advises people to cultivate truth and righteousness, so that people no more live a life of humiliation. He says in Majh Ki Var.

ਸੋ ਜੀਵਿਆ ਜਿਸ ਮਨਿ ਵਸਿਆ ਸੋਇ ॥
 ਨਾਨਕ ਅਵਰੂ ਨ ਜੀਵੈ ਕੋਇ ॥
 ਜੇ ਜੀਵੈ ਪਤਿ ਲਥੀ ਜਾਇ ॥
 ਸਭ ਹਰਾਮ ਜੇਤਾ ਕਿਛੁ ਖਾਇ ॥
 ਰਾਜਿ ਰੰਗੁ ਮਾਲਿ ਰੰਗੁ ਰੰਗਿ ਰਤਾ ਨਚੈ ਨੰਗੁ ॥
 ਨਾਨਕ ਠਗਿਆ ਮੁਠਾ ਜਾਇ ॥
 ਵਿਣੁ ਨਾਵੈ ਪਤਿ ਗਇਆ ਗਵਾਇ ॥

By creating an awareness of the adverse effects of fear generated by tyranny and oppression on the one hand and discrimination from man to man on the other, Guru Nank aroused public consciousness against this evil.

It should be noted that human mind in the form of consciousness, is itself a big force. Bhakt Kabir says :

ਇਹ ਮਨ ਸਕਤੀ ਇਹ ਸਨ ਸੀਓ ॥

(Gauri—page 342)

If this consciousness is properly aroused and more so if the public consciousness is aroused, it becomes a limitless force for ending injustice, tyranny, oppression and discrimination, which are manifestations of evil. Public opinion based upon firm faith, cannot be subdued for long. It always assumes a physical form as and when it gets sufficient momentum. This force is more potent and more lasting than any type of weapons.

(7)

It is generally believed that God Himself is the biggest and the most potent force for the eradication of evil. There is no doubt about that. But this force has to be invoked through meditation, devotion and concentration upon His qualities, through self-less love, self abdication and complete surrender to His will i. e. Bhakti, to put it in one word. It is to be remembered that the Formless is not going to come down Himself on the earth in some physical or body form to eradicate evil. Guru Nank emphasizes that He resides in the soul (mind) of the people at large. "(Wich Sangat Har Prabh Vasse Jeo)." Therefore arousing the public mind, according to Guru Nank, is the invokation of this divine force.

A necessary requirement for all this is the cultivation of faith in this divine spirit—the divine power in the mind of not one individual alone but that of the entire public, the entire humanity. This in its turn is to be brought about not by miracles of any kind, but through a consistent method of teaching through arguments and logic. This logic could be based upon universal brotherhood and equality of man, so that a foeless human organization may be developed. Guru Nanak devised the institutions of Sangat as well as Pangat whereby all discrimination and differentiation between man and man, the root cause of pride—which is the mother

of evil. could be eradicated practically. At the same time faith in the Universal, Omnipotent power of the Fearless should be cultivated. He emphasizes upon people to owe allegiance to the rule of the Ultimate Truth. He says "Sache Ki Sirkar Jug Jug Janeaye" (Var Majh). It is this important principle which eliminates all fear and all animosity, the manifestations of evil.

A very important aspect of his teaching was that whereas the public opinion was to be aroused against tyranny, oppression and human exploitation, this aroused public feeling might not itself indulge in any sort of injustice, cruelty, oppression exploitation, and imposition. For creating a feeling of fearlessness in the public mind it was very necessary that this feeling may not itself indulge in creating terror. Thus the cultivation of the spirit of mercy along with the feeling of fearlessness was of utmost importance, rather the spirit of mercy was to be kept supreme. Thus whereas he emphasizes upon people to owe allegiance to the rule of ultimate and universal Truth, he lays equal emphasis on faith in the ultimate Goodness, the well being of all. He ends up the above said verse of Var Majh with "Sab Dunya Subhan Sach Samaiye" so that the force of public opinion should not only be tainted but rather controlled by the ultimate goodness, merey, Dharam or saintliness.

(8)

The second, third, fourth and fifth Gurus concentrated upon cultivating Guru Nanak's message among the people of the Majha and Doaba areas of Punjab through their compositions and established a number of religious institutions like Sangats, Baolis, Sarovars etc, to give practical shape to Guru Nanak's message of universal brotherhood and equality of man and attach a social aspect to his ideology. No doubt their main emphasis was on cultivating the spirit of mercy and dharam on the one hand and eradication of the evil growing out of the selfish tendencies on the other, so that a social set

up of true saints-devoted selflessly to the love of God, love of mankind and equality of man could be established. They gave a practical shape to this love for humanity by offering yeoman's service to the suffering humanity as well as putting forward many welfare schemes for the people in general. They established a number of towns, where their institutions like Sangats, serais, water supply etc. were established along with a number of different types of vocations and occupations, so that dignity of work and labour leading to self reliance, economic growth and self respect could be cultivated. They laid special emphasis upon the respect and regard for women so that dignity for the family life could be established. They put forward a number of social reforms like eradication of Sati, casteism and untouchability etc., so that the entire society should have a forward outlook. Along with this they gave considerable attention to arouse their conscience against injustice and creating a mind free from all types of fears afflictions and dominations. Along with their religious and social welfare institutions, they established such institutions as Mal Akharas so that people should be physically fit enough to meet any challenge to their self respect.

Guru Arjun Dev, the fifth Guru, a saint, scholar and dedicated social reformer, inspite of his extremely peaceful conduct of preaching and propagating Guru Nanak's message of peace, amity and universal brother hood, had to suffer three attacks by the royal armies first under Bir Bal, then under Noor Din and a third time under Sulhi Khan. At the time of the attack by Sulhi Khan, a number of dedicated and devout Sikhs approached the Guru with the request for permission to give a befitting reply to the attacking army. This means that there was sufficient awareness among the people to stand up against oppression. But Guru Arjun Dev asked them to refrain from doing so. He asserted that he would submit to His will gladly whatever it might be. It is for this reasons that he has been known as an apostle or a Treasure of Peace and Patience. But even such a saintly person was arrested and made to suffer

such barbaric tortures as being made to sit in a cauldron of boiling water and then on a red hot iron plate, while hot sand was poured over him. His only fault was that he refused to submit-to the royal order of giving up his faith and accepting Islam, under the threat of coercion. Submission to coercion to give up ones' faith is the height of demoralization, which tantamounts to killing ones' conscience. This is the height of evil. Guru Arjun accepted death through barbaric torture, but did not submit to coercion and upheld the freedom of his conscience. His martyrdom proved how fearless a saintly person could be. His martyrdom also gave a clear proof of how far evil could go in scuttling human conscience. Public awareness created by the teachings of Guru Nanak, about the evil effects of cruelty and oppression received a big fillip. People felt the need to call a halt to this barbarity so that innocent goodness should not be eliminated and devoured by the evil.

(9)

Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, though eleven years old, on assuming Guruship i. e. spiritual leadership, got himself adorned with two swords—popularly known as Miri and Piri, representing temporal power and spiritual authority respectively. By this concept not only Piri-saintliness and spiritual authority was to be protected by Miri—the temporal power, but even Piri was represented by a sword, indicating that Piri (saintliness) itself was a force. Then Miri-temporal authority which also implies self respect, should always be guided, rather prevailed upon by Piri i. c. goodness. Natha and Abdullah two ballad singers of the darbar of Guru Hargobind have explained this concept of Miri and Piri in their verse :

ਦੇ ਤਲਵਾਰੀ ਬਧੀਆ ਇਕ ਮੀਰ ਦੀ ਇਕ ਪੀਰ ਦੀ
ਇਕ ਅਜ਼ਮਤ ਦੀ ਇਕ ਰਾਜ ਦੀ ਇਕ ਰਾਖੀ ਕਰੇ ਵਜੀਰ ਦੀ

It was for this reason that Guru Hargobind built his throne-Akal Takhat, in such a manner that it faces Harmandir—the spring head of spirituality—goodness, mercy and dharam,

brotherhood and equality, so that all orders from Akal Takhat should be with a view on Hari i. e. God whose abode was the Harmandir.

As a Mir Guru Hargobind adorned the royal attire, wearing a plume and keeping a falcon on his hand-again a symbol of force. He would ride a horse and go on hunting expeditions. As a Pir he addressed religious congregations and served the suffering people at Lahore and Sri Nagar when a fever was raging there in epidemic form. Then as a token of mercy he held his shield to provide shade on the head of dying Painde Khan, who, at the head of Mughal army attacked him and suffered a blow at his hands in the battle.

People who had set their mind to protect their honour and self respect collected around him. He himself gave them training in using weapons. He had ordered his followers to bring presents of good weapons and horses to him when they should come to pay obeisance to him. Thus he collected an army of seven hundred horsemen and a few thousand soldiers. He had four skirmishes with the royal army and did win them. His purpose was not to occupy any area or establish his suzerainty or rule, but just to make the government read the writing on the wall that the people were sufficiently awake as not to tolerate any injustice and oppression and they were strong enough to protect their self respect by the use of force, if needed.

An interesting episode, quoted by Dr. Ganda Singh pertains to his meeting with a Maharashtrian saint, Samrath Ram Das in the Garhwal region. Ram Dass asked him what type of faqir he was, when, he was adorning a royal attire. The Guru's reply was, "Internally a hermit, externally a prince." Regarding his swords he impressed upon Ramdas that they were meant for protecting the innocent, poor and downtrodden and eliminating the oppressing tyrant—"Gharib ki rakhya jarvane ki bhakhya." Samrath Ram Das was so much impressed by the Guru's message of keeping the arms to protect the poor and saintly persons, that he expressed his liking for his ways.

This Samrath Ram Das was later on helpful in initiating the great Maratha warrior, Shivaji into a life of national upliftment by picking up arms against the injustice perpetrated on the Hindus by the bigotry of Aurangzeb.

(10)

During the fanatic rule of Aurangzeb, due to his policy of bringing the whole of India in the fold of Islam, forces of oppression and terror were let loose against the Hindus. The Brahmins in Kashmir were particularly the target of excessive tyranny and oppression by the overzealous subedar of Kashmir in subjugating them to accept Islam. Guru Tegh Bahadur, the 9th Guru, was approached by the Kashmiri Pandits. He was so deeply touched by their tale of woe that he felt that the very basis of Dharam i. e. mercy and respect for human values particularly human life and independent thinking had vanished. The very character of India-peaceful co-existence of the multiplicity of religions and unity in diversity of the people and their thoughts, was at stake. The Guru decided to meet the emperor and impress upon him to respect the rights and feelings of the down trodden. But he was arrested and his companions were subjected to inhuman and barbaric torture. One of them was boiled in a cauldron of water, another was wrapped in cotton and then burnt alive and the third was sawn into two from head to bottom. All this was done before the Guru's eyes so that he should be so terrified as to give up his view as well as faith and embrace Islam.

The Guru who was wedded to the ideology of being fearless and foeless, had himself declared, "Neither I terrify any one nor do I fear anyone." He proved true to his words- the words of a perfect saint. Since all this exercise of torture of the Guru's companions did not cow him down to subjugation he was beheaded in the Chandani Chowk with the specific instructions that the limbs of his body should be hung in

different parts of the capital so that people, particularly non muslims of Delhi and there through the whole of India should understand the fate that awaited them.

No doubt a wave of sorrow went through the entire population, but the Guru's followers did not get horrified as is proved by the fact that the Guru's head was carried by Bhai Jaita to Anandpur and his body was cremated by Lakh Shah, a government contractor, who set fire to his house wherein the headless body of the Guru had been brought. In fact the state terrorism proved counter productive, as a Sikh hurled a brick upon King Aurangzeb when he was boarding a boat after offering the Friday prayers in the Jama Masjid, a few days after the Guru's death. The martyrdom of a saintly person like Guru Tegh Bahadur acted like a morale booster, to make them firm in their resolve to become as fearless as the Guru himself to eliminate evil, for which they rallied round his son Guru Gobind Singh for leadership and direction.

(11)

Guru Gobind Singh, though of a tender age of nine years was faced with the problem of protecting and emancipating Dharam in an atmosphere of ascendancy of evil, which was spreading through unchallenged oppression, cruelty and terror let loose on innocent people. Even saints like his father were not spared. It may be noted that even Sarmad, a Muslim Sufi saint had to suffer death at the hands of the Emperor.

The Guru accepted this challenge as a sacred duty entrusted to him by Almighty. As he mentions it in the Bachittar Natak—his autobiography, this duty had two components, to uphold and propagate dharam and to dissuade people from evil.

ਮੈਂ ਅਪਣਾ ਸੁਤ ਤੋਹਿ ਨਿਵਾਜਾ ॥
ਪੰਥ ਪ੍ਰਚੁਰ ਕਰਬੇ ਕਹੁ ਸਾਜਾ ॥
ਜਾਹਿ ਤਹਾਂ ਤੈ ਧਰਮ ਚਲਾਇ ॥
ਕਬੂਧ ਕਰਨ ਤੇ ਲਕ ਹਟਾਇ ॥

He further mentions that the vcry purpose of his coming to the world was to spread dharam and emancipate saintly persons from the clutches of the evil, by completely putting the latter to rout, for which he held a solemn assurance to the saintly ones.

ਹਮ ਇਹ ਕਾਜ ਜਗਤ ਮੋ ਆਏ ॥ ਧਰਮ ਹੇਤ ਗੁਰਦੇਵ ਪਠਾਏ ॥

ਜਹਾਂ ਕਹਾਂ ਤੁਮ ਧਰਮ ਬਿਬਾਰ ॥ ਦੁਸਟ ਦੋਖਾਅਨ ਪਕਰਿ ਪਛਾਰੇ ॥

ਯਹੀ ਕਾਜ ਧਰਾ ਹਮ ਜਨਮੈ ॥ ਸਮਝ ਲੇਹੁ ਸਾਧੂ ਸਭ ਮਨ ਮੈ ॥

ਧਰਮ ਚਲਾਵਨ ਸੰਤ ਉਬਾਰਨ ॥ ਦੁਸਟ ਸਭਨ ਕੇ ਮੂਲ ਉਪਾਰਨ ॥

He re-affirms his complete dedication to the cause of Dharam in very clear and unequivocal terms when he makes a solemn prayer to the Almighty to bestow upon him the boon that he should die fighting with the help of weapons in the thick of a battle for upholding and establishing the ultimate Truth i. e, Dharam;

ਹੇ ਰਵਿ ਹੇ ਸਸਿ ਹੇ ਕਰੁਣਾ ਨਿਧ, ਮੇਰੀ ਅਬੈ ਬਿਨਤੀ ਸੁਨ ਲੀਜੈ ॥

ਅੰਰ ਨ ਮਾਗਤ ਹਉ ਤੁਮ ਸੇ ਕਛੂ, ਚਾਹਤ ਹੋ ਚਿਤ ਮੈ ਸੋਈ ਕੀਜੈ ॥

ਸ਼ਸਤ੍ਰਨ ਸੋਂ ਅਤਿ ਹੀ ਰਣ ਭੀਤਰ, ਜੂਝ ਮਰੋਂ ਤਉ ਸਾਚ ਪਤੀਜੈ ॥

ਸੰਤ ਸਹਾਇ ਸਦਾ ਜਗ ਮਾਇ, ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰ ਸਹਾਮ ਇਹੈ ਬਰ ਦੀਜੈ ॥

"ਕਿਸ਼ਨ ਅਵਤਾਰ"

He believed that God Himself feels the pangs of suffering when the saintly ones are in pain and He is happy if they are happy :

ਸੰਤਨ ਦੁਖ ਪਾਏ ਤੇ ਦੁਖੀ ॥

ਸੁਖ ਪਾਏ ਸਾਧਨੁ ਕੇ ਸੁਖੀ ॥

Therefore an integral part of Bhakti, which for all intents and purposes aims at pleasing God, is to relieve the innocent and saintly ones of any pain and suffering. If this suffering and pain are caused by the evil the latter has to be eliminated. This is very much in line with the assertion of Bbakt Kabir that it is his personal duty and responsibility to act like a policeman to uphold the honour and respect of the saintly ones and punish the evil doers (Ramkali page 969 A.G.). Guru Hargobind had also said that his sword was for the

protection of the innocent and elimination of the tyrant. This quality of a true Bhakta was to be generated in every Sikh, who was required to be a true Bhakta and a true saint for all intents and purposes. Thus every individual of the entire social set up envisaged by Guru Nanak was to be equipped with this faculty along with saintliness.

(12)

It is to be noted that though the Epical personalities, Sri Rama and Sri Krishna had risen to the occasion to eliminate the evil in their times for protecting the honour and respect of the innocent ones and thereby re-establishing Dharam, their spirit could not be emulated by the people. This was because people revered them as God incarnate and as such believed that only they being the Avatars, had the capacity to eliminate evil. It was beyond the capacity of ordinary mortals to emancipate Sitas and Daropadis, suffering at the hands of the evil tyrants. Guru Gobind Singh wanted this capacity to be acquired by every individual so that people should themselves rise to the occasion as and when an evil tyrant threatened the innocent Sitas and Daropadis. For this purpose he categorically and emphatically declared that no one should call him either God or God incarnate.

ਜੇ ਮੁੜ ਕੇ ਪਰਮੇਸ਼ਰ ਉਚਰ ਹੈ ।

ਤੇ ਸਭ ਨਰਕ ਕੁੰਡ ਮੈਂ ਪਰ ਹੈ ॥

He asserted that he is an ordinary mortal working at the behest of the Super Being (Param Purksh). He translated this assertion into a practical shape when he begged for Amrit from those five Piaras, who were administered Amrit by him. Thus he became a disciple of his own disciples, thereby mitigating any feeling of his being in any way superior to others.

In this manner he humanized the institution of incarnation so that every individual should feel the presence of the divine light and divine force in himself acquiring thereby sufficient self confidence to fight the evil, along with the Guru as

well as like the Guru and generation after generation after him.

That was a major step towards the involvement of the entire society for fighting the menance. This step has gone a long way in perpetuating this spirit among ordinary people for fighting and eliminating the evil to protect their dharam and self respect. This step eliminates the need for any incarnation coming to the rescue of dharam. Every individual devoted to dharam could be sufficiently strong in himself or herself to protect it.

(13)

The most important problem before Guru Gobind Singh was to initiate martial spirit in each individual while maintaining the saintly spirit and saintly bent of mind. There is no doubt that the spirit of saintliness and bhakti, as well as the awareness of the ill effects of the evil and the need for the elimination of evil had been stressed by the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev. They were deeply cultivated among the people by the Gurus following Guru Nanak. The martyrdoms of Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur had aroused in them an intense feeling of protecting their honour, self respect and faith and checking the unchallenged onslaught of evil in the form of tyranny and oppression. This awakened public consciousness no doubt formed a very potent factor but it lacked the spirit to pick up arms against this persistent tyrannical evil, which was backed by autocratic, despotic, highly sectarian and bigot authority, having scant regard for the masses and public opinion, particularly when this authority was having a well equipped army. In such circumstances there was, as is usual, the danger of the built up public opinion being ploughed down to demoralization with force, if it did not stand up in arms against this evil authority. It could get frustrated by mass killings as well as killing of the leaders like Guru Tegh Bahadur.

It was necessary to cultivate the martial spirit among the saints and bhaktas as it was this class of selfless and

dedicated people, who could take up the responsibility of defending their fellow beings in accordance with the words of Kabir. (Page 969 A.G.)

It may be noted that the Kshatryas, the traditional defending arm had been completely paralysed due to the concerted efforts of the bigot rulers to keep them out of the army for a number of centuries and they had begun to pick up petty jobs in government or run petty shops. Rajputs on the other hand had been so much demoralized that they were vying with one another to win favour with the Mughal rulers by offering their daughters in matrimony to the Mughal princes or officers. The petty Rajput hill chiefs were becoming vassals to retain their chieftainships. Guru Gobind Singh's advice to them to give up their shackles and depend upon none other than their own power for their position went unheeded. His advice was

ਕੋਊ ਕਿਸੀ ਕੋ ਰਾਜ ਨ ਦੇ ਹੈਂ, ਜੋ ਲੈ ਹੈ ਨਿਜ ਬਲ ਸੇ ਲੈ ਹੈਂ ॥

But they side tracked the issue by saying that they would join him only if he did not carry the low caste ones with him. Guru Gobind Singh rejected this plea as he was following Guru Nanak's dictum of always carrying with him the lowliest of the low :

ਨੀਚਾਂ ਅੰਦਰ ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤਿ ਨੀਚੀ ਹੂ ਅਤਿ ਨੀਚੁ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਤਿਨ ਕੇ ਸੰਗ ਸਾਬ ਵਡਿਆਂ ਸਿਉ ਕਿਆ ॥

(Sri Rag M. 1 page 15 A.G.)

How could the people in the higher echelons of society, who were exploiting the common man on the one side, and stood so demoralized as to have pawned away their conscience for selfish ends on the other, be entrusted with the task of rehabilitation of the self respect and honour of the people in general.

In fact Guru Gobind Singh retorted back to the hill chiefs and others who looked down upon the common people, with unambiguous emphasis that he would create warriors and sardars out of these commoners and make them capable of winning battles, occupying the throne and ruling over the land.

It were the common people who were suffering the most at the hands of the oppressing rulers. The potentialities and faculties of all the people were alike, they only needed to be developed. All the people put together should constitute the human potential to stand up solidly like one man for fighting the powerful menace. He did not want to repeat the old mistake of creating a separate class of fighters, but in its stead he created a peoples' fighting force wherein every individual was to be a fighter. It was because of his confidence in this potential of human power with him, that he wrote to Aurangzeb that he would create so much fire under the hoofs of the latter's steeds that he would not be able to tread.

This martiality was not to be an end in itself. It was only a means of elimination of evil so that the order and preponderance of mercy, the mother of dharma should be established. Therefore this martial spirit was to be built on a strong base of goodness-real saintliness which was in fact the end.

(14)

Of the various steps taken by him for this purpose, which can be called the steps for combining together Bhakti with Shakti, the following are worth mentioning. These steps are based upon his writings.

(A) Guru Gobind Singh asserted an unflinching faith in the qualitative and living personality of the Formless (God) who being the sole creator of all the phenomena in the universe is manifest in their forms, qualities, functions and relationships. Though manifest in this huge and limitless diversity, this personality remains indivisible and unitary in nature, creating thereby a unity in the diversity of phenomena by His all pervasiveness. He is also enshrined in the conscience of all the human beings, thereby creating a unity, equality and therefore brotherhood of the entire mankind. Due to this manifestation of His qualities He is the source of inspiration,

guidance, and value system for man as also the centre of concentration upon His name—Naam, which in itself implies a totality of His qualities thus manifest.

In Jap Sahib, after describing His qualitative nature, Guru Gobind Singh lays particular emphasis upon His kindly disposition towards all his creation, including man. He therefore calls upon people to look to Him and Him alone for safety and protection against all troubles, enemies and adversities as He is always present with them (in their conscience) with all His kindly disposition and graciousness as well as the mightiest and unflinchingly strong helping hand. Only He has the capacity to ward off the adverse moments.

This faith of dependence upon the mightiest of the mighty becomes the source of immense courage, fearlessness and independence of character. Of course this faith is to be inculcated through prayers for His grace and kindness, so that the ego, which is the mother of all evil, remains subdued.

(B) He is to be approached through sincere and selfless love. Selflessness implies complete surrender and abdication to His Will. This in its turn would save you from any frustration due to any failure, or building up of ego due to success. You will accept the success as His Grace and failure as His Will. Frustration is the greatest factor in bringing demoralization. So faith in His Will on the one hand and in His being the most kindly disposed towards you and His being your greatest benefactor on the other, will save you from frustration and demoralization. You will remain undeterred by any failures. You will always look forward with confidence and acquire a spirit of ascendancy with faith in His grace. Keeping up high morale is very necessary for building a martial spirit. Sikhs call this spirit of ascendancy "chardikala." Of course this spirit of ascendancy is based upon His Naam so that you do not indulge in self imposition or evil.

Love for God is to be reflected in serving people, particularly those who are suffering. This enjoins upon you to come to the rescue of others willingly and voluntarily.

(C) The omnipotent character of God is manifest in Death. Guru Gobind Singh has addressed God as Maha-Kal-i.e. Death, the Great. By projecting Him as Death and asking people to love Him he created among the people a sense of fearlessness. The greatest fear for man is that of Death. But you don't fear the one whom you love. Therefore love for God projected as Death-the Great, would lead to love for death i. e. complete fearlessness. People imbued with this spirit would approach death with a sense of zeal and enthusiasm. To put it in the words of Kabir a spirit of dying for a cause was created.

ਕਬੀਰ ਮੁਹਿ ਮਰਨੇ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ ਹੈ ।

ਮਰਉ ਤ ਹਰਿ ਕੈ ਦੁਆਰ ॥

(A. G. page 1367)

To put it in the words of Guru Nanak their selfless love for God generated in them the feeling of offering even their head as a token of their obeisance.

ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਦਾ ਚਾਉ ॥

ਸਿਰੁ ਪਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ ॥

ਇਤੁ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪੈਰੁ ਪਰੀਜੈ ॥

ਸਿਰੁ ਦੀਜੈ ਕਾਣਿ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ ॥

(A. G. page 1412)

Guru Gobind Singh went to the extent of considering Death, the Great as his grand protector and saviour.

ਮਹਾਂ ਕਾਲ ਰਖਵਾਰ ਹਮਾਰੇ

and again in Akal Ustat he says

ਸਰਬ ਕਾਲ ਜੀ ਦੀ ਰਫ਼ਿਆ ਹਮਨੈ ।

and this forms the height of fearlessness.

(D) At a few places in his compositions Guru Gobind Singh has saluted God by addressing Him as a grand battle :

ਨਮੇ ਚੁਪ ਜਥੇ

The purpose was to create a love for fighting for a cause, equivalent to the love for God, so that no one should turn his back upon the battle field, because with this denotation and denomination turning one's back upon the battle would tantamount to

turning one's back upon God Himself, the height of disgrace for a holi man, and so also for a warrior. Similarly going to the battle would create a sort of zeal for them, equivalent to going to meet one's God. Going to the battle field for the emancipation of dharam and elimination of evil thus became a sort of zeal, a passion for them.

(E) Guru Gobind Singh symbolized the unchallengeable and undeterred authority of the Almighty with steel and therefore addressed God as Maha Loh and Sarb Loh while affirming faith in the protecting quality of God.

ਸਰਬ ਲੋਹ ਕੀ ਸਦਾ ਰਛਾ ਹਮਨੈ ॥

(Akal Ustat)

“I am always under the protection of All Steel”

Again at another place he calls himself as a small piece or splinter of the Great Steel

ਮਹਾ ਲੋਹ ਮੈ ਕੰਕਰ ਬਾਰੋ

Daily recitation of such verses, which depict God as All Steel or the Great Steel, would make people concentrate upon and emulate the character of undeterred firmness of Steel.

Regarding the impact of sacrament of steel in building the character of the Khalsa, Edmond Candler writes in his book “The Mantle of the East P. 120-121).

“When Guru Gobind Singh inaugurated the sacrament of steel he proved himself a wise and far sighted leader. For all material things which genius has inspired with spiritual significance steel is the truest and most uncompromising. Let humanitarians prate as they will, there never has been a race who have not been purged and refined by grossness and the monster of self. To the Khalsa it gave a cause and welded them into a nation; and in the dark days of Mohammed rule in the middle of the eighteenth century, when the Sikh was slain at sight and no quarter was given, it drove them on those gallant crusades in which they rode to Amritsar in the dead of night, leapt into the sacred tank and out again and galloped back through the enemies' lines purified. Hundreds were slain, but not one objured his faith or perjured his soul to preserve

“his muddy vesture of decay.”

(“Transformation of Sikhism After 1606 A.D.) a lecture by Dr, Ganda Singh-published in “Sikh Gurus and the Indian Spiritual Thought,” Punjabi University Patiala-1981, Editor, Dr. Taran Singh).

(F) Guru Gobind Singh in his compositions addressed God as ‘Khanda’ (double edged sword), ‘Teg’ (sword), ‘Kharag’ (sword with a wide blade) and ‘Bhagauti’ etc.

- (1) ਪ੍ਰਿਥਮੈ ਖੰਡਾ ਸਾਜਕੈ ਸਭ ਸੈਸਾਰ ਉਪਾਇਆ ॥
- (2) ਜੈ ਜੈ ਜਗ ਕਾਰਣ ਸਿਸਟ ਉਬਾਰਣ ਮਹ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਰਣ ਜੈ ਤੇਰੀ ॥
- (3) ਖੜਗ ਕੇਤ ਮੈ ਸਰਨ ਤਿਹਾਰੀ ॥
- (4) ਪ੍ਰਿਥਮ ਭਰੌਤੀ ਸਿਮਰ ਕੈ ॥

These symbols represent a combination of the omnipotent character of God manifest in death and the unchallengeable and undeterred authority of God similized by steel.

By addressing God with these symbolical names Guru Gobind Singh moulded the love for God into love for these weapons. Through these symbolical names he emphasized that God Himself is a big Shakti to be invoked by Bhakti and it is this Shakti which ultimately emancipates the innocent ones and saints, eliminates evil and brings peace and joy to these innocent and saintly people. It was this Shakti which was invoked by Sri Ram, Sri Krishan and Durga who deployed this for the elimination of evil in their times.

ਪ੍ਰਿਥਮੈ ਖੰਡਾ ਸਾਜ ਕੈ ਸਭ ਸੈਸਾਰ ਉਪਾਇਆ ॥
ਤੈਥੋਂ ਹੀ ਬਲ ਰਾਮ ਲੈ ਨਾਲ ਤੀਰਾਂ ਦਹਿਸਰ ਘਾਇਆ ॥
ਤੈਥੋਂ ਹੀ ਬਲ ਕ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਨ ਲੈ ਕੰਸ ਕੇਸੀ ਪਕੜ ਗਿਰਾਇਆ ॥
ਤੈ ਹੀ ਦੁਰਗਾ ਸਾਜ ਕੈ ਦੈਤਾਂ ਦਾ ਨਾਸ ਕਰਾਇਆ ॥

Guru Gobind Singh himself goes to the lap of this Shakti denominated as Teg (sword) for his own protection as well as for the welfare of the world, with a devotioal prayer.

ਸੁਖ ਸੰਤਾਂ ਕਰਣੰ ਦੁਰਮਤਿ ਦਰਣੰ ਕਿਲਵਿਖ ਹਰਣੰ ਅਸ ਸਰਣੰ ॥
ਜੈ ਜੈ ਜਗ ਕਾਰਣ ਸਿਸਟ ਉਬਾਰਣ ਮਹ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਰਣ ਜੈ ਤੈਰੀ ॥

By considering them as symbols of the Shakti of the Almighty, a sort of confidence in wieldidg them would be created

along with a reverence for them, which is so necessary for a true soldierly spirit. Their attachment with the Shakti of the Almighty implies their use only for the protection of the down-trodden from the tyrant and not for any wordly gains. To put it in the words of Guru Har Gobind they were to be used only for

“ਗਰੀਬ ਕੀ ਰਖਿਆ ਜਰਵਾਨੇ ਕੀ ਭਖਿਆ”

Guru Gobind Singh re-iterates his devotional respect for these weapons, very much similar to the respect to be shown to a spiritual guide—a pir,

ਅਸ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾਣ ਖੰਡੋ ਖੜਗ ਤੁਬਕ ਸਬਰ ਅਰ ਤੀਰ ॥

ਸੈਫ ਸਰੋਹੀ ਸਾਤਿਬੀ ਯਹੀ ਹਮਾਰੇ ਪੀਰ ॥

(ਸਸਤਰ ਨਾਮ ਮਾਲਾ ਪੁਰਾਣ)

so that they are neither to be mishandled nor misused. They are to be used for the freedom of the conscience of the people, as this conscience is the abode of God, the abode of Dharam.

In order to build up a true martial spirit he salutes all types of weapons, because it is with their help that he would be able to eliminate evil.

ਜਿਤੇ ਸਸਤ੍ਰ ਨਾਮੰ ॥ ਨਮਸਕਾਰ ਤਾਮੰ ॥

ਜਿਤੇ ਅਸਤ੍ਰ ਭੇਖੰ ॥ ਨਮਸਕਾਰ ਤੇਖੰ ॥

(Bachittar Natak)

(G) Guru Gobind Singh translated from Sanskrit to Hindi portions of Markande Purana, Ramayana and Mahabharata and included them in the Dasham Granth under the headings of Chandi Chritra Part I and II, Vaar Sri Bhagauti Ji Ki (in Punjabi) Ram Avtar and Krishan Avtar. An intimate study of these would reveal a few specific purposes in this direction.

(i) To acquaint the people of their religio-socio-cultural heritage of fighting the evil and eliminating it to re-establish righteousness and Dharam. Cultural heritage always has a great bearing on moulding the character of the people, and it constitutes the mainstream of their socio-cultural life. It has therefore to be protected, to maintain their cultural identity.

(ii) To re-establish the faith and pride of the people in their religio-cultural heroes/heroines e.g. Rama, Krishna and Durga. The faith of the people had been shattered by the Islamic zealots by breaking their statues and subjecting their images which were worshipped by people in their temples, to the meanest indignations and humiliations. The Guru humanized these mythical heroes, heroines or Avatars and depicted them fighting successfully like men and women, against the forces of evil, so that people should regain faith in their strength and emulate them in valiantly fighting the then prevailing forces of evil. It should be noted that the re-establishment of dharam does not mean converting people to your own faith and bringing them in your fold, but it means of make people firm in whatever faith they possess, establish their pride in it, so that they begin to draw inspiration from it. That was the real service to Dharam and therefore to secularism rendered by Guru Gobind Singh.

(iii) In these compositions the Guru so vividly portrays the scenes of the battle and gives so intimate details of the valiant hand to hand fight of these heroes with the evil forces, creates such sound pictures and word pictures of these scenes, that the reader or listener feels himself present in the battle field, fighting on the side of the hero. An impression of complete involvement is created. This would create in him not only a faith in the strength of the hero, but also inspire him to emulate the hero. This in its turn would create in him a lot of courage to fight even the fiercest battle. Guru Gobind Singh himself says in verse No. 260 of Chandi Chritra Part II, that even if the most coward and gutless person listens to (or reads) this, he will pick up courage to fight in the thick of even the fiercest battle.

ਸੁਣੈ ਸੂਮ ਸੋਫੀ ਲਰੈ ਜੁੱਧ ਗਾਵੇ ॥

(iv) To boost the morale of the downtrodden, he uses such similes for the falling evil forces, as pertained to the tyrants of his times. He very often creates humour by making a fun of their fall with such similes.

ਚਲੇ ਸਉਹੇਂ ਦੁਰਗ ਸਾਹ ਜਣੁ ਕਾਬੇ ਹਾਜੀ ॥
 ਇਕਿ ਘਾਇਲ ਘੂਮਨ ਸੂਰਮੇ ਜਣੁ ਮਕਤਬ ਕਾਜੀ ॥
 ਇਕਿ ਬੀਰ ਪਰੋਤੇ ਬਰਛੀਏਂ ਜਿਉਂ ਝੁਕ ਪਉਨ ਨਿਵਾਜੀ ॥

(H) He arranged for the teaching of fencing, use of weapons and skill in fighting. At Anandpur Sahib he established a factory (at Lohgarh) for making weapons, set up a school for teaching fighting and battle craft at Holgarh, and started taking out a procession therefrom on the day following Holi wherein people displayed their skill in fighting. This tradition still persists. He encouraged people who brought him good, horses, new and better weapons and were valient fighters.

(I) Hunting expeditions and mock battles were generally held.

(J) As a morale booster he introduced war terminology in the routine work and conversation, so that people got deeply drenched in the atmosphere of fighting. He introduced Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wahe Guru Ji Ki Fateh as a form of salutation. They would address one another as armies (faujan) and that too always in the plural form. The actual numbers were pronounced after multiplying them with a lakh, Thus a single person was called Sava Lakh, two as two lakhs and so on. Similarly the word lakh was added to the actual count of the money, horses etc. The idea was to give people a sense and feeling of plenty even in adversity, Then he introduced the slogan of Charhdi Kala as a great morale booster. Not only the prefix Singh, meaning a tiger, was added to the name of every male individual, but such initial names were given to both men and women as smacked of a spirit of ascendancy and high morale. Such names as Ajit (invincible), Jujhar (warrior), Zoravar (powerful) Fateh (victory), Teg Bahadur, Vijay, Ranjit, Ranbir, Dalbir, Jodh, Ranjodh, Nidharak (undeterred) Teg, Kharag, Shamsher, Dilawar etc. which pertained to war terminolgy became quite popular.

All this went a long way in creating among ordinary people, drawn from various walks of life and various castes a strong spirit of martiality.

Through the ceremony of the administration of Amrit, Guru Gobind Singh forged together the spirits of saintliness and martiality (Bhakti and Shakti) in each individual, so that each individual being himself (or herself) a saint should not only be able to defend and protect his own faith and self respect but should also be able to stand up to defend the honour and respect of other people against the onslaught of evil and at the same time the spirit of martiality generated among the people should always remain bridled with the spirit of saintliness so that they should never over step goodness so as to fall in the lap of evil.

Since the spirit of saintliness was foremost, selfless devotion and dedication to the extent of self abdication willingly and voluntarily to His Will, was the pre-requisite for the administration Amrit. Guru Gobind Singh administered Amrit first to those five persons who willingly and voluntarily offered their heads in response to his call, indicating their selfless devotion. He therefore called them the five beloved ones for their intense love, reflected in their self abdication.

Now let us discuss what Amrit stands for and what are the values attached with each of the ingredients with which Amrit was prepared.

It should be noted that the word Amrit, literally meaning nectar, has been used in the Sikh scriptures for Naam-The formless, the all pervading and omnipotent God, with all His qualities and functions. Administration of Amrit is a sort of administration of oath to the person concerned to ever remain an unflinchingly faithful believer in Him, always remember Him by concentration upon His limitless qualities, abdicate himself to His will and recognize none other than Him for his devotion and dedication, look to Him and Him alone for His grace in adversity as well as happiness and recognize His presence in every one and every where.

At the same time by concentration upon His omnipotent character and depending upon His grace he should acquire sufficient strength as to purge any evil or animosity coming in the way of his devotional attachment with Him.

By acquiring through His grace an independent and unattached conscience and recognising His presence in every one, he would consider every one his equal, his brother, worthy of his brotherly affection, sympathy and help. He would thus lead an absolutely fearless and foetless life. Friendship towards all and independence from fear and animosity would in fact make his life as sweet as Amrit-the nectar, since it would ultimately lead to merger with Him.

Amrit is prepared by dissolving sugar candies (badashas) in water in a steel pan by stirring it with Khanda-a double edged sword made of steel while reciting Japuji, Jaap Sahib, Sawayyas, Chopai and Anand Sahib.

Water which is considered a universal source and saviour of life is known as Amrit in Indian classical literature as well as in Sikh scriptures. It represents all pervasiveness and universality in so far as it is present every where and constitutes an integral part of all forms of life. It forms therefore a representative symbol of God whom we consider not only a source and saviour of life, but also a living and all pervasive personality. Water is highly dynamic in character, full of energy (in potential as well as kinetic form), capable of adjustment to any environment while maintaining its basic quality of coolness. It can assume the shape of the container, but can resume its flow downwards as soon as it leaves the container. This flow reflects its natural dynamism and undeterred will to move towards its ultimate goal-the sea. This flow therefore symbolizes the flow of life. It can acquire any colour and taste and can leave them too. Thus it remains fully involved as well as unattached. It is the most important agent for cleaning away all the dust dirt and soil which symbolize evil. Water provides relief, solace and dynamic energy to every one without distinction or discrimination. As it reflects many

qualities and attributes of God, Bhakt Kabir has recommended a saintly person to become like water,

ਹਰਜਨੁ ਅਸਾ ਚਾਹੀਐ ਜਿਉ ਪਾਨੀ ਸਰਬੰਗ (A. G. 1372)

Though Bhakta Kabir has decried its quality of heating Bhai Gurdas says that since water suffers cooling, heating and even boiling for the benefit of others, a saintly person should emulate and acquire this quality of Altruism present in water along with its quality of extinguishing fire, quenching heat and coming back to its basic quality of coolness immediately. There is a famous saying in Sanskrit that how so ever hot water may be, it has the capacity to extinguish fire.

Sugar represents energy, strength and vigour in concentrated form on the one and and sweetness on the other. It is universally accepted as a symbol of intense love, attraction and liking. God and especially love of God have been likened to sugar and sweetness. It is also the ideal of human relations. Guru Nanak says "Sweetness and humility are the essence of all virtue." Bhai Gurdas has recommended the Sikhs to acquire and emulate this quality of sugar. It may be of interest to note that Baba Farid was launched into Bhakti through sugar.

By preparing Amrit with water and sugar Guru Gobind Singh gave a practical sanction as well as symbolical direction to the emulation of their qualities for building up Bhakti in the character of the Sikhs.

Guru Gobind Singh has symbolized the undeterred, unchallengeable and uncompromising authority of the Lord with steel and has therefore addressed him as Mah-Loh, the great steel or Sarab Loh-the All steel. For infusing uncompromising firmness in faith and undeterred self confidence based upon faith, among the Sikh, he introduced the element of steel by preparing Amrit in a steel pan, while stirring it with a steel khanda.

Khanda literally means the one that breaks or kills, which is the ultimate attribute and sole proprietary of God

Almighty, the omnipotent. Guru Gobind Singh has addressed God as Maha Kal-Death the Great and has also addressed Him as Khanda or Kharag in his writings. Thus a steel khanda combines together the symbolical value of steel as well as that of khanda and becomes a symbol of unrelenting, all powerful and omnipotent strength of the Almighty—His Shakti. Guru Gobind Singh wanted Sikhs to invoke, inculcate and emulate this shakti for their protection as well as for removing, subjugating and eliminating evil. By administering the Amrit prepared by steel Khanda, he introduced this element of the superb shakti symbolized in steel khanda in the character of the Sikhs.

When Guru Gobind Singh prepared Amrit, he recited with full concentration, attention and devotion five compositions of Sikh scriptures namely Japuji, Jap Sahib, Swayyas, Chopai and Anand Sahib, while he was dissolving sugar candies in water in a steel pan by stirring the ingredients with khanda. This recitation implied the concentration upon God—the formless as the centre and source of all the qualities of the ingredients and many more as all these qualities are ultimately His manifestations and are combined and united in Him. He is therefore the ultimate uniting and integrating force for all the phenomena and all the people. Only He is to be looked upon as guide, source of inspiration, protection, and ultimate goodness, merger with whom is the ultimate goal. He is to be approached only with love and devotion, crowned by His Grace, which should always be prayed for.

Thus through the preparation of Amrit while reciting devotional scriptures, Guru Gobind Singh combined together, ceremoniously the saintly qualities symbolized by water and sugar with soldierly qualities symbolized by steel and khanda, through Gurbani about which Dr. Taran Singh says that Japu Ji creates a saint in the Khalsa and Jap Sahib a soldier. We can say he merged together Bhakti and Shakti through this ceremony.

(16)

An important point to be noted here is that Amrit prepared by stirring its ingredients with Khanda has been termed by Guru Gobind Singh "Khande ki Paohal." According to the Indian custom then prevailing, if you accept some one as your teacher, guide or Guru, you would sip the water in which his big toe has been washed, implying thereby that you will humbly accept his guidance and, working accordingly, you would emulate and acquire his faculties. Here Khanda symbolizes God-the all powerful, the source of omnipotent shakti and the source of all knowledge and goodness. By sipping this Khande Ki Paohal, you become directly attached with Him, you accept Him as your guide and Guru and do not recognise any worldly being as your superior, or guide. In this manner all worldly influences, including the influence of the self in you is eliminated. Accepting the Paohal of Khanda therefore implies complete surrender and abdication to His Will-The Will of the Omnipotent and to none else. This is the peak of saintliness. The elimination of the influence of the self would go a long way in preparing a clear and straight forward conscience that is called Khalsa-owing allegiance to none except Him. This is the real spirit of independence that is generated by Amrit as Khande ki Paohal.

Since the influence of even the self is eliminated, the mind becomes fully devoted to Him and the person becomes a true Bhakt. Then the elimination of the influence of the self enables him to offer any sacrifice, even the supreme sacrifice for Him, for His cause and for His people. It is this selfless devotion that is the source of strength for fighting even the fiercest battles.

It should be noted that taking Khande Ki Paohal

implies invoking and emulating all that, what Khanda stands for. As mentioned above it symbolizes Maha Kal-Death the Great-an attribute of the Omnipotent Almighty. This quality would make a Sikh not only a fierce fighter, but also so fearless as never to be daunted by death, rather he begins to love death. Having conquered death he has as if conquered the world. Guru Gobind Singh says in Bachittar Natak.

ਜਿਤੇਕ ਕਾਲ ਧਿਆਇ ਹੈ ।

ਜਗਤੁ ਜੀਤ ਜਾਇ ਹੈ ॥

Thus Khande Ki Paohal creates a devoted bhakat, a self sacrificing person and at the same time a superb and unsurmountable fighter for the cause of Dharm i. e, independence of conscience, and service of humanity which is the abode of the All pervading.

(17)

The method of administering the thus prepared Amrit to the five volunteers who offered their heads to the Guru, again reveals the combining together of bhakti with shakti. These five volunteers came from different castes-high as well as low and they came from different parts of India too. They were asked to sip Amrit one after the other in two rounds from the same pan just as real brother would partake their food or water from the same utensil thereby removing any feeling of caste or regional distinction or untouchability and bringing about a brotherly equality among them. Division or distinction among men is the mother of all evil as it is also the greatest weakness of a people. Guru Nanak had decried this distinction and sought to remove it. Guru Amar Das made it obligatory for all who came to meet him, to eat the same food, while sitting in the same row where people from high as well as low castes were sitting together side by side with one another. Guru Ram Das created the holy tank of Amritsar where all people coming from high as well as low

castes, as also from different regions would bathe together in the same tank. It was because of the removal of the evil of untouchability and creation of equality through bathing in the same water, that it has been named as Amritsar—the tank of Amrit (Equality). Guru Arjan, while compiling Granth Sahib, included within it the verses of various Bhaktas coming from different castes-high as well as low, as also from different regions along with the verses of the Gurus themselves and in this manner demonstrated the ideal of uniformity and universal brotherhood among them which is the ideal of Saintliness. Guru Gobind Singh gave a finishing touch to this process of bringing about equality, by asking these people to sip Amrit from the same bowl. He himself jumped into this line of equality by asking these five volunteers to administer Amrit to him. Thus he removed the distinction of the Guru and the disciples. Whereas distinction among men is the mother of all evil, equality among them is an attribute of saintliness and hence Amrit. Then division and distinction is the cause of weakness, upon which evil thrives, equality among them generates unity, which ultimately results in strength capable of fighting out the evil. Thus through the process of administering Amrit by making them sip from the same bowl, he created simultaneously the saintliness of equality i. e. Bhakti and the strength of unity-emotionally integrated unity i. e. Shakti and this was very much in line with the thinking of Guru Nanak as also the working of the other Gurus.

(18)

This first five volunteers who were administered Amrit, are popularly known as the five beloved ones because of their faithful and selfless devotion and complete surrender to the will of the Guru. They were renamed by the Guru in such a manner that the word Bhai was the prefix, and Singh the suffix of their names: Bhai Dya Singh, Bhai Dharm Singh, Bhai

Himmat Singh, Bhai Mohkam Singh, and Bhai Sahib Singh. The symbolical value attached to the words Bhai and Singh is of considerable importance. Bhai stands for brother hood, equality, and fraternity and at the same time it implies animosity towards none. According to Indian custom a brother is required to offer cooperation, help and protection in the hour of adversity. Thus for all intents and purposes it is a saintly attribute and manifestation of the quality of Nirvair put forward by Guru Nanak. Singh, meaning a tiger, is a symbol for fearlessness, courage and strength, a manifestation of the quality of Nirbhau put forward by Guru Nanak. Thus by attaching the words Bhai and Singh with their names, Guru Gobind Singh combined together the attributes of Bhakti or saintliness and Shakti i. e. force or strength, in one and the same person simultaneously. The words Bhai and Singh attached with the names of the Sikhs requires them to always behave with others like their brothers and saviours with full brotherly affection and all sincerity without any distinction or discrimination, in as fearless and courageous a manner as that of a tiger with full strength and courage. For this purpose any evil or adversity has to be faced jointly with the courage and strength of a tiger, and eliminated.

It should be noted that the word Bhai is prefix and comes first, and Singh as suffix comes in the end of the name, implying saintliness and brotherly affection first and use of force, if at all necessary, as a last resort. This is very much in line with what his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur had said

ਭੈ ਕਾਹੁੰ ਕਉ ਦੇਤ ਨਹਿ ਨਹਿ ਭੈ ਮਾਨਤ ਆਨ

“I don’t threaten any one nor do I fear any one.” In this verse, “I do not threaten any one” comes first and “nor do I fear any one” later. Guru Gobind Singh himself has mentioned it in Zaffar Name in Persian

“ਚੂੰ ਕਾਰ ਅਜ ਹਮਾ ਹੀਲਤੇ ਦਰਗੁਜਸ਼ਤ
ਹਲਾਲ ਅਸਤ ਬੁਰਦਨ ਬ ਸਮਸ਼ੀਰ ਦਸਤ”

“It is legitimate to use force (sword) as a last resort, when all other means fail.” This motto is very much manifest in using Bhai as prefix and Singh as suffix with the names of the Sikhs.

After administering Amrit to the Five beloved ones and then himself being given Amrit by them, Guru Gobind Singh got Amrit administered to thousands of people through the Five Beloved ones. These people came from all walks of life but majority of them were peasants and workers. Thus he created an army of brothers—universal brothers, each one equipped with the courage and fearlessness of a tiger for helping one another as well as all other people like brothers in restoring, upholding and maintaining righteousness, their self respect and honour and removing any pressure or impediments to their independent thinking and independent living, thereby creating independent conscience, which is after all the abode of Dharam. Emancipation and re-establishment of Dharam was thus the ideal of each one of them and for this purpose they were all ever willing to fight to the last, and even sacrifice themselves for this cause. It is for this reason that he called this army of selfless and unattached people as “Khalsa Akal Purakh Ki Fauj”—the Army of God, the Deathless, the army of Righteousness.

He was very particular that these people held Godliness as their ideal and they fought for Godliness only. He clearly mentions this aim while addressing God by the name of various weapon

ਤੂ ਹੀ ਨਿਸਾਨੀ ਜੀਤ ਕੀ, ਆਜ ਤੂ ਹੀ ਜਗਬੀਰ
(ਸਸਤਰ ਨਾਮ ਮਾਲਾ ਪੁਲਾਣ)

It is for this reason that the Sikhs came to be called saint-soldiers where in Bhakti and Shakti were combined together, with the spirit of saintliness or Bhakti coming first and soldierly spirit afterwards.

(19)

Of the five outward symbols of identity-Kesh, Karha, Kachha, Kangha and Kirpan, each beginning with the Punjabi letter K-prescribed to be worn by each Amritdhari Sikh, it would be very pertinent to discuss the symbolical value of Kirpan, which is usually called the Sikh symbol of shakti. The word Kirpan, can be described as a synthesis of two Punjabi words Kirpa and Aan. The word "kirpa" literally means mercy or kindliness and the word "aan" means self respect. They are in turn manifestations of saintliness and power respectively. Kirpan therefore stands for a combination of saintliness (Bhakti) and power (Shakti), where in Kirpa i. e. mercy or kindliness comes first and Aan follows it. Thus it is in complete consonance with the above said idea of Bhakti preceding Shakti but not following it.

He emphasized that the purpose of Kirpan was to bring about happiness to the godly ones and the elimination of evil.

"ਸੁਖ ਸੰਤਾਂ ਕਰਣੇ ਦੁਰਮਤਿ ਦਰਣੇ"

It was again in complete consonance with Guru Hargobind's idea of protection of the downtrodden and elimination of the tyrant. In this above said verse of Guru Gobind Singh again "bringing happiness to the saintly ones"

"ਸੁਖ ਸੰਤਾਂ ਕਰਣੇ"

comes first, implying that it is the aim, and the elimination of the evil coming later implies that it is only a means and that too as a last resort.

Guru Gobind Singh gave a practical proof of being merciful and kindly even to the enemy, by getting a tola of gold attached to each of his arrows, so that if the enemy is killed, a provision should be made for his family for some time or for his burial or cremation and if he survives, it should be possible to arrange for his treatment.

This kindly, disposition even towards the enemy, at the time of fighting to protect your honour and self respect, is an important aspect of the discipline of Kirpan, which should not be taken merely as a weapon or as a symbol of Shakti. It is in fact a concept symbolizing a synthesis of Bhakti with Shakti where in Bhakti in the form of Kirpa and kindly disposition is the preponderant influence. It should be noted that without this preponderant influence of "Kirpa" the kirpan would be reduced to a dagger, a sword or a weapon, it would lose its meaning and would no more be a Kirpan.

Thus Amrit forms a sort of oath or pledge for combining together Bhakti with Shakti, where in the dominant emphasis is on Bhakti i. e. Simran or remembering God; Shakti is to be used only to remove any over imposition of evil and exploitation which imperil the freedom of conscience and scuttle Dharam. Of course Shakti is to be used so sparingly that it is the last resort when all other means have failed.

(20)

A study of the history of the eighteenth century would reveal the miracle brought about by combining Bhakti with Shakti in the Khalsa-an army of saint soldiers-universal brothers, Akal Purakh Ki Fauj.

In order to protect Dharam, they had to fight out the over imposing evil of fanaticism on the part of the government, whose avowed aim was to convert people to Islam under the threat of force and thereby change the multi-religious character of India into Dar-ul-Islam. For this purpose they offered a number of sacrifices willingly and ungrudgingly, suffering inhuman torture at Lahore and Delhi. At the same time they offered very tough fight to the armies sent out to hound them. Many villages all over Punjab and northern parts of the present Uttar Pradesh sought protection of the Sikh saint-soldiers against the tyranny of the government forces and came under

the system known as Rakhi (brotherly protection). Confidence in the protection provided to the villages by these saint soliers can well be gauged from the following popular saying of those days :

ਆ ਗਏ ਨਿਹੰਗ ਬੂਹੇ ਖੋਲ੍ਹੇ ਦਿਓ ਨਿਸੰਗ
“Now that the Sikhs are there,
open the doors of your houses.
Rest assured there will be no harm ”

These were the days of anarchy. Bands of soldiers from the royal army or foreign invaders roamed about looting and harassing people so that they had to leave their hearths and homes on seeing these bands arriving. But when Sikhs (also called Nihangs) were there, they felt secure and kept their doors open.

So impressed were the people by the sincerity of the Sikh soldiers in protecting the honour, earnings and Dharam of the people, that they would offer themselves for being administered Amrit and join the army of the Khalsa. It is because of this popular will to protect themselves against the onslaught of fanatic and tyrannical rule that their numbers swelled much more quickly than they were butchered. The following verse about Mir Mannu—the provincial governor of Punjab who is known in Sikh history as a great tyrant, reflects the popularity of the Sikh movement during the middle of the eighteenth century.

ਮੰਨ੍ਹ ਸਾਡੀ ਦਾਤਰੀ ਅਸੀਂ ਮੰਨ੍ਹ ਦੇ ਸੋਏ
ਜਿਉ ਜਿਉ ਮੰਨ੍ਹ ਵਚਦਾ ਅਸੀਂ ਦੂਨੇ ਚੌਣੇ ਹੋਏ ।

(Mannu is our sickle and we are his crop. As he cuts us to finish us, we swell and expand with double, nay four times the rate).

These Sikh soldiers carried on a guerrilla war with the mighty but fanatic Mughal empire in Puujab for about a century —the longest guerrilla war ever fought in the world, resulting in the liquidation of this evil of fanatic rule in Punjab. The impact of this guerrilla war in protecting the Dharam is reflected in the following vrse by Bulleh Shah, a sufi poet of Punjab.

ਤਬ ਕੀ ਨਾ ਜਬ ਕੀ ਬਾਤ ਕਹੂ ਮੈਂ ਅਥ ਕੀ

ਅਗਰ ਨਾ ਹੋਤੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਸੁੰਨਤ ਹੋਤੀ ਸਭ ਕੀ'

(If I talk of the actual reality, then it is a solid fact that had Guru Gobind Singh not entered the field, every person would have been converted into Islam).

It was quite customary during this period that the muslim rulers and their officers would forcibly take away non-muslim women to their harems, thereby humiliating the non muslims-particularly the high caste Hindus. No one had the courage to challenge them. Khalsa rose to the occasion for saving the honour of the people. A newly married Brahmin girl was abducted by the Nawab of Kasur. Her husband approached the Sikh soldiers collected at Akal Takht, Amritsar. Their leader Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia at once decided to help the Brahmin, though he knew that the Nawab was very powerful at that time. The entire Sikh contingent collected at Amritsar, immediately ran to Kasur, attacked the Nawab and recovered and restored the Brahmin girl, to her husband though they had to suffer a loss of thousands of precious lives.

Similarly when Ahmad Shah Abdali after his victory in the third battle of Panipat, was taking away a large contingent of Indian particularly, Hindu girls to Kabul, Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia sprang upon the Abdali horde and liberated more than two thousand 'Sitas' and 'Dropadis' from the clutches of the evil insurgent and delivered them to their respective parents honourably. Thus these saint soldiers brought an end to the humiliation being perpetrated upon the people of India-particularly the Hindus for many centuries. This was a feat brought about by combining Bhakti with Shakti which created the spirit of Shri Rama and Shri Krishna in every individual.

It is to be noted that while fighting the enemy hordes, the chivalry and valour of the Khalsa soldiers were marked by the fact that they would not harm the children, women and infirm or old men belonging to the enemy. Women of the enemy who fell in their hands were respectfully and honourably

restored to their camps or homes, along with their ornaments and other valuables in tact. They would never torture a fallen enemy, nor follow a fleeing enemy. They would neither dishonour him nor take him a prisoner. That is the true saintly spirit, of killing the evil, but not the person.

Eighteenth century was the period when Nadir Shah Durani and later on Ahmad Shah Abdali attacked India a number of times. These saint soldiers in the form of guerrillas became not only a big menace for them, but converted their conquests into miserable failures by looting their armies of all the booty they were carrying home, depriving them of horses and weapons and killing large numbers of their soldiers. Their most prized portion of the booty-Indian women, were invariably rescued. They would not rest till the invading army had crossed the Attock westwards. Though the Sikhs had to suffer large scale massacres like the Big Ghallughara at Kup in the present Sangrur District, where more than twenty thousand Sikhs, men women, and children were slain by the forces of Ahmad Shah in a day or so, but their persistent struggle marked by doggedness closed once for all the gate of Khyber to the invading hordes from Kabul. This gateway for the insurgent armies entering India since the times of Aryans and Alexander the Great, down to Babur, Nadir and Ahmad Shah Abdali, was closed for ever by the Shaktivan Bhaktas of Punjab created by Guru Gobind Singh so that the story of Babur Vani was not to be repeated after that. It was nothing short of a miracle brought about by combining Shakti with Bhakti.

